

### Marijuana Use

Drug use by adolescents can have immediate as well as long-term health and social consequences. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among high school students. Marijuana use has both health and cognitive risks, particularly damage to pulmonary functions as a result of chronic use (1, 2). Possession and/or use of marijuana is illegal and can lead to a variety of penalties.

■ In 1999 almost one-half (47 percent) of high school students had used marijuana during their lifetime and one-fourth (27 percent) of high school students had used marijuana one or more times in the past 30 days (that is, current use). Male students were more likely than female students to report ever using marijuana and using it in the past 30 days.

■ Both female and male students in the higher grades (10th–12th) were more likely to have ever used marijuana than students in 9th grade. Current use of marijuana among male and female students also increased significantly between 9th and 12th grade. Of students who had ever used marijuana, 11 percent first tried it before age 13 (8 percent of female students and 15 percent of male students) (3).

■ Among female students, current and lifetime use of marijuana varied little by race and ethnicity. Among males there were no significant differences by race and ethnicity in marijuana use.

■ Marijuana use among high school students increased substantially between 1990 and 1999 (4). Fifty percent more students had used marijuana at least once in 1999 than in 1990 (47 percent versus 31 percent), and almost twice as many students had used marijuana during the 30 days preceding the survey (27 percent versus 14 percent).

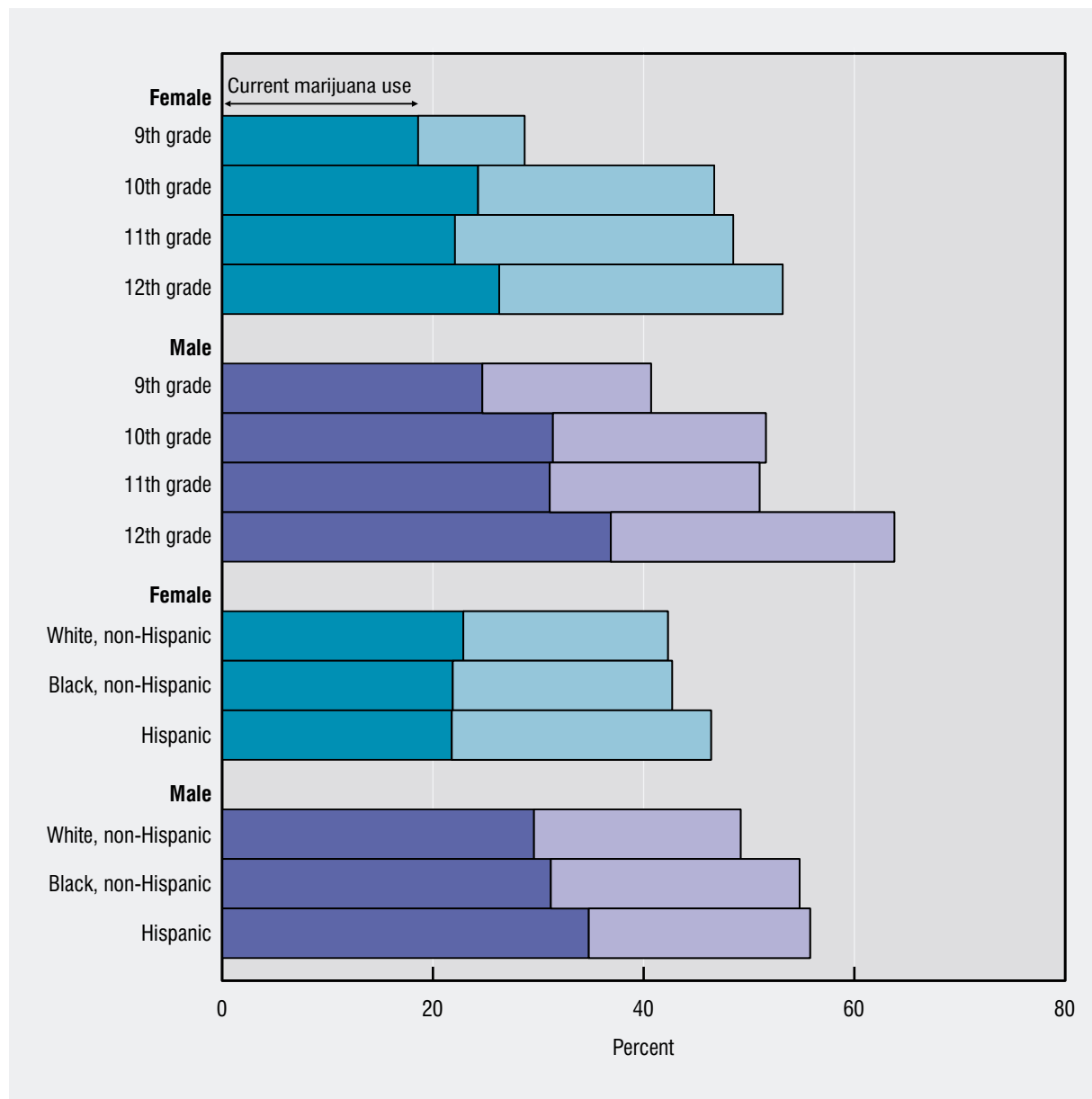
■ A Healthy People 2010 critical adolescent objective calls for a reduction in the proportion of adolescents reporting use of marijuana and other illicit substances in the past 30 days (5).

■ Adolescents face health consequences from other drug use, as well. Cocaine use is linked with health problems that range from eating disorders to disability to death from heart attacks and strokes (6). In 1999, 10 percent of high school students reported using some form of cocaine (powder, “crack,” or “freebase”) during their lifetime and 4 percent reported using cocaine in the past 30 days (3).

### References

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Marijuana: Facts parents need to know. Washington: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (NCADI Publication No. PHD712). 1995.
2. Pope HG Jr., Yurgelun-Todd D. The residual cognitive effects of heavy marijuana use in college students. *J Am Med Assoc* 275(7). 1996.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 1999.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alcohol and other drug use among high school students—United States, 1990. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 40(45):776–7,783–4. 1991.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2010 (Conference Edition, in Two Volumes). Washington: January 2000.
6. Blanken AJ. Measuring use of alcohol and other drugs among adolescents. *Public Health Rep* 108(Supplement 1). 1993.

Figure 28. Lifetime marijuana use among students in grades 9–12, by sex, grade level, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1999



NOTES: Lifetime marijuana use is defined as having ever used marijuana. Current marijuana use is defined as having used marijuana 1 or more times in the 30 days preceding the survey. See Technical Notes for survey methods. See Data Table for data points graphed.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).